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Atari Online News, Etc.
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~ Anti-Terrorist Bill! ~ People Are Talking! ~ Atari Titles Coming!
~ Net Tax Ban Renewed! ~ AOL Tracking Users! ~ Chu Chu Rocket!
~ Online Privacy Issues! ~ San Fran Bans Filters! ~ CinciClassic News!
~ Internet Case Examined ~ Xbox Parental Controls ~ Songbird News!

-* Microsoft Increases Security *-
-* Computer Industry Takes On Viruses! *-
-* FTC Shuts Thousands Of Deceptive Web Sites *-

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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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In an effort to return to normalcy, I'm going to try to refrain from mentioning the recent attacks in the U.S. I do want to mention, however, that there are a lot of scams and hoaxes permeating the internet with regard to the attacks. I'm recommending that people be cautious about what they read - especially e-mail attachments that could lead to various problems. I also want to mention that people really need to consider the full extent of governmental recommendations with regard to "cyber security" considerations. Things like e-mail surveillance and other monitoring methods can lead to a breakdown of our personal rights to privacy.

Speaking of personal rights, I've included an article in this week's issue about a recent decision in San Francisco. Essentially, city officials have banned all filters in city-owned computers within its public library system. By doing so, the city is risking the loss of federal funding. I applaud the city's decision! The government's use of strongarm tactics to attempt to protect kids is wrong. At least in this instance. I've said it time and time again - let parents teach their children why they should refrain from using the internet to view pornography or other illicit topics. Let the school system reenforce those values. Come up with a better plan to accomplish the goal. How about a system in which children of a pre-determined age group requiring a special library card which would authorize computer use in libraries - issued after parental authorization. Parents who have concerns about their children need not apply. I'm sure there are many solutions which do not arbitrarily prevent the use of a faulty system due to filtering software. I hope more cities and towns make similar decisions, and not be bullied with the threat of funding being stopped. Good for you, San Francisco!

Until next time...

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Chu Chu Rocket

Guildford, Surrey - September 2001. The Reservoir Gods announce the

imminent release of "Chu Chu Rocket"; an arcade puzzle game for the Atari STe and Falcon030.

"Chu Chu Rocket" originally appeared on the 128-bit Sega Dreamcast console and immediately gained critical acclaim for its innovative and addictive gameplay.

"Chu Chu Rocket" is a game for 1 to 4 players. It incorporates a number of different modes of play including a four player battles, single player puzzle levels and co-operative challenge stages.

The base machine for the game is the Atari STe, it was felt that this was the minimum requirement to achieve a comparable gaming experience to the 128-bit original. The extra hardware features of this machine are used to their fullest extent, including the blitter, extended palettes, jaguar pad support and stereo sampled sound.

The game features graphics by "shTHREE" and new Reservoir Gods member "neo". It also has an unprecedented 14 pieces of exclusive new Sid-Sound music composed by the award winning "MSG".

All the original sound effects from the DreamCast version have been sampled for this version, including all the sampled speech.

The game features 100 levels of puzzles across 4 different worlds, 25 levels of multiplayer gaming and 25 challenge stages. There are extra secret features which get unlocked on completing sections of the game.

Reservoir Gods were formed in 1994 as a software team developing products for Atari computers. There releases to date include the games "Double Bobble 2000", "Tautology 2", "SkyFall", "Static" and "Bunion Canyon". They have also created the art package "GodPaint", GameBoy emulator "GodBoy", Nintendo NES emulator "GodleNES" and have been responsible for the disk magazine "Maggie".

After a period of inactivity, they are now hard at work creating new products for the Atari platform, ably supported by new members "neo" and technical specialist "Griff" (formerly of "Inner Circle").

"Chu Chu Rocket" is set to ship in October 2001.

Further information available at http://rg.atari.org

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING

compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Boy, am I behind on stuff.

I hate when that happens. Normal life is hectic enough. Its the other things that come at you from out of the blue that tend to mess you up. Of course today, that IS normal life.

Mother nature has been somewhat kind to us here in the northeast this week. It's been warm and sunny. Of course, she's just lulling us into a false sense of security so she can really sock it to us later on.

You may have noticed that my mood is a bit darker than usual.... Or, you may not. There's a lot of that "dark mood" thing going around, and it kind of gets lost in the shuffle.

You're probably in one of those moods from time to time yourself, so you know the feeling. I guess the important thing is to just keep on keepin' on.

Well, let's get on with the news, hints, tips, and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup

'Overdoc' asks about transferring Atari files from a PC back to an ST:

"I recently got a Atari 520ST donated, including the 3 1/2 disk drive and also a Oceanic 5 1/4 disk drive. Since it came without any software I would like to download some disk images from the net and transfer them back to real Atari ST disks.

So far I found one PC tool (stupid me forgot it's name) that told it could do the job, but all .msa images I tried ended up in a way that only the directory could be read, and when loading files was attempted read-errors occurred.

Now, is there another, safer way to transfer some disk images ?
Maybe there is some tool that will let me read a .msa image on a PC formatted disk with the Atari's drive, copy it to ram and then write it back to a Atari formatted disk using the Atari ST itself, and not the PC as the other tool did ?

I know this method from the Amiga, and there it works perfect. So I thought such a tool must exists for Atari STs, too, right?

If anyone can point me in the right direction, please don't hesitate."

Bob Retelle tells Overdoc:

"Actually "Atari format" and "PC format" are exactly the same.

That is, a floppy disk formatted on a PC can be read on an Atari ST, and vice versa (with a few restrictions).

First of all, the ST drives are Double Density (720K) - they will NOT read a PC formatted High Density disk (1.44 Meg).

Secondly, depending on how old the ST is, it may have a Single Sided disk drive (if it has an external floppy disk drive, the model number for Single Sided drives is SF354. The Double Sided drives are SF314).

Unfortunately, it's difficult to make a PC format a 3.5 inch disk as a single sided (360K) disk. If you have a single sided Atari floppy

drive, you may have to use a special Atari formatting program that fixes the buggy formatting routine so the disk can be read on the PC. I believe the PC should be able to read and write a single sided disk, it just won't be able to format one.

Lastly, early versions of the Atari operating system had a bug in the disk formatting routines that made the disks unreadable in a PC. The solution to that is to always format the floppy disks on the PC, and then they will be readable in BOTH the PC and the Atari.

One other thing to think about, the Atari floppy drive, being a lot older, may be dirty or have gone out of alignment so it will have trouble reading a standard formatted disk. If you can format and read a floppy on the Atari, but get read errors from the PC disk, this may be the problem."

Ken Springer adds:

"I don't remember exactly the difference, but although they have the same number of tracks and sectors, something about the way the data is stored on the floppies yielded more actual data storage space on the Atari disks.

If I remember correctly, you just have to write the PC boot sector info to an Atari formatted disk for the PC to read it. There were both shareware and commercial programs to do this. I think Double Click software had a commercial formatting program for this, but I honestly don't remember. I probably have it in the Atari floppies I have.

As for the PC formatting a single sided floppy, that depends on the age of the PC and the DOS version installed. As DOS gained in abilities, MS slowly removed things from it like the ability to format a different number of sectors and/or tracks, even tho' the instructions on how to do it (i.e. type in the format command with proper switches) still remained in the manuals.

That wasn't a bug. The PC needed information in the boot sector of the floppy that the Atari didn't. Atari's formatting routines just didn't write info it didn't need. I can't remember which version of TOS added that to the formatting routine, but I think it was 1.04. I have a TOS 1.04 machine and could format a floppy and find out for those who might be curious.

I would format the floppy on the PC, if you can do it on your PC. (Win98 will not format a 360k disk, I just checked.) It's just a guess on my part, but you probably don't have the ability to write the boot sector information you need in order for the PC to read the disk even if there is nothing wrong with the formatting and the disk drive. It would be best not to use a Win95 or newer machine. Try to find one that has Windows for Workgroups installed, or better yet, one with DOS 3.x on it. Workgroups used DOS 6.22 in it's last incarnation. Then to double check the PC formatting, you can try the floppy on a Win95 or newer PC."

James Haslam tells Ken:

"Actually, I think you're thinking about the Amiga formatting scheme, which got 880K out of a disk! :)

The difference between an ST formatted disk and a PC one is the boot

sector being different. There is a program that will change the boot sector into a PC compatible one WITHOUT destroying the data on the rest of the disk!"

Ken Springer tells James:

"Not thinking of Amiga, but I didn't know their formatting would allow that much data. Mac disks hold 800k, maybe a tad more, I don't remember that either! <G>

This has forced me to boot up the old Mega 4. <G> And I think I've been thinking about Neodesk. Formatting with Neodesk 3 gives me about 2k more space than formatting with TOS 1.04."

Steve Sweet jumps in and adds:

"Formatting is done by the floppy drive device, not the OS and so is the same on any platform. The OS sometimes puts its own mark on things by customising the OEM section of the boot sector, which in the case of Atari/Dos.Win-dose compatible disks is 'MSDOS'."

Daniel Dreibelbis posts this about his latest online find:

"having just gotten my Handspring Visor Deluxe, I decided to see just what was out there in the way of programs, and particularly those E-Books out there.

   well, I just happened to go onto the Aportis website (they make a document reader for Palm OS) and saw they have an E-book section.

   Wouldn't you know it - someone has come up with an E-book History of Atari, from Syzergy to Hasbro, for free download! And it's pretty good, too. Lots of info and fun facts about Atari - did you know that they sold 350,000 copies of Tempest 2000 for the Jaguar? They also talk about the Atari computers, from the 8-bit to the Falcon

   If you've got a Palm or compatible and want to check it out, go to http://www.aportis.com/library/index.html and click in the Computers section. You'll need an E-book reader to load and read it.

   BTW, the Visor Deluxe is pretty good, too - they've just discontinued it, and so you should be able to grab hold of one of these for a good price. I got hold of a refurbished one from the Handspring web site for $119 US + free shipping. This thing has as much RAM as my TT does, and it's turning out to be pretty useful for work-related stuff. Now I'm getting ready to order a digital camera Springboard module for it."

'Chris' asks about setting up TOSbox:

"I'm trying to setup TOSbox v1.10a on a HP Pavilion 700 mhz Intel Celeron processor with 192 megs of RAM and 30 gig hard drive.. The OS is Windows ME.

The problem is that Papyrus 8 doesn't work too well and TOSbox seems to get all the drive letters mixed up. That is when the HD is partitioned.

Anyone has had any success with TOSbox on a Windows ME computer? What about other Windows based Atari ST emulators? Do they work well with Windows ME? Will any of them run Papyrus 8?"

Djordje Vukovic tells Chris:

"My opinion is that TOSbox is not an optimum choice if you want to use the emulator through Windows. TOSbox is best used in DOS. Perhaps you should try other emulators- Gemulator or STem. I have used Gemulator, admittedly on NT4, not ME, and found it quite Atari-compatible; in fact, somewhat more compatible than TOSbox. It was also significantly faster.

If I remember correctly, I tried a demo of papyrus 8 both on TOSbox/DOS and Gemulator/NT4 and it seemed to work. In what way it "didn't work too well" for you?

Concerning drive-letters being mixed up, is it possible that maybe the emulator was not configured properly (mounted directories, etc.)?"

Bob King asks about DA's Layout:

"All the Digital-Arts web sites seem to be down. Has anyone got the demo version of DA's Layout for the Mac. I've looked very closely at PageMaker and Quark, and they are not a patch IMHO on either LayoutTC or Calamus. I'm getting PageStream 4, but rally would like to get Layout. Layout Atari, wont run in MagicMac, or at least not for me. It doesn't like multitasking I think. One more reason for holding onto my Milan."

Martin Byttebier tells Bob:

"You can try this URL
http://www.zdnetasia.com/downloads/mac/swinfo/0,2000040393,20074839s,00.htm

Hmm, I surely runs in freeMiNT."

Bob tells Martin:

"I've tried it already, using Explorer, it just loops back to the same page. I'll try it with iCab, but I think that Digital have pulled everything or the rest of the world just couldn't care less about the (joint) best DTP program on the planet.

As for freeMint, I run Magic on my Milan, and have to reboot it in single task mode (Magicboot disabled) to get Layout to work. The Mac version seemed to be inferior in that it did not have the 'Services' 'plug-ins' and there was not the use of the Mac's built in printing drivers."

Well folks, that's it for this time around. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Infogrames To Release Atari Titles!
  """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""" Xbox To Have Parental Controls!

Okage: Shadow King! Super Heroes!
And much more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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OKAGE: Shadow King Transports Players on a
Mystical Journey for THE PlayStation2

Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. announced the release of OKAGE: Shadow King, an engrossing 3D role-playing game available exclusively for the PlayStation2 computer entertainment system. OKAGE: Shadow King combines traditional role-playing elements with action-packed, dramatic real-time battle sequences, strategic gameplay and puzzle-solving that will challenge and stimulate gamers' minds. Featuring a mesmerizing storyline with some of the most eccentric characters ever seen in a videogame, OKAGE: Shadow King is set to transport players on a graphically spectacular adventure this fall and throughout the holiday season.

''The incredible story of OKAGE: Shadow King appeals to both traditional RPG fans and action-adventure enthusiasts with its innovative design, creative plot and unique graphical look," said Ami Blaire, director, product marketing, Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. ''Featuring a captivating storyline, twenty beautifully-rendered environments, six extraordinary, entertaining characters and hours of immersive gameplay, OKAGE: Shadow King truly showcases the capabilities of PlayStation 2."

The tale of OKAGE: Shadow King takes place in a remote village called Tenel, where young Ari lives with his family. When a ghost attacks Ari's sister, his father unknowingly unleashes Stan, the spirit of a great evil demon, in a desperate attempt to protect his daughter. Stan agrees to save Ari's sister's life, on the condition that he can possess Ari's shadow, forcing Ari to become his slave. Once resurrected, however, Stan discovers that his powers are weak and he no longer has the ability to instill fear and terror in those he hopes to rule. After learning several other demons already inhabit the world, Stan is convinced that they are the cause of his weakness and forces Ari to join him on a quest to purge the country of these imposters. Navigating as Ari, players will find themselves entangled in a whirlwind of myths, legends and traditions as they make their way across brightly-colored landscapes, encountering whimsical characters, fighting fierce enemies and deciphering the mysterious clues and secrets spread throughout the world in which they live.

OKAGE: Shadow King introduces a unique approach to traditional role-playing games with its stylized visuals and interesting characters, and features dramatic real-time battle sequences in which allies and enemies fight simultaneously. In addition, gamers will discover hundreds of attacks, spells and weapons, and more than 150 items to collect during their adventures through lively towns and ominous dungeons. With its combination of immersive narrative, challenging gameplay, wonderfully animated characters and spectacular graphics, OKAGE: Shadow King adds a unique and

exciting role-playing game to the PlayStation 2 catalog this fall.

Key features in OKAGE: Shadow King:

-- Innovative and unique approach to traditional role-playing games. Players will find themselves enslaved by the shadow of an evil king, thrown into battles with hundreds of enemies, engrossed in exploring new worlds and wrapped up in trying to solve complex puzzles.
-- Six creatively developed and entertaining characters, each with their own personality, strengths, powers, attacks and spells.
-- Hundreds of attacks, spells and weapons for players to choose from and more than 150 items for players to collect throughout their journey.
-- Engage in enchanting conversations with unique characters, decipher mysterious clues and riddles, unravel the secrets hidden far beneath and discover the magic of this charming adventure.
-- Action-packed, dramatic battle sequences where allies and enemies fight simultaneously, all set in real-time environments.
-- Hours of engrossing gameplay featuring brilliantly imaginative and magical three-dimensional worlds with 20 different areas, including five towns, six fields and nine dungeons.

The independent Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) rates OKAGE: Shadow King ‘‘T" for Teen.

Cross-continent Racing Speeds to Retail as Acclaim Entertainment, Inc. Ships ‘Paris-Dakar Rally’

The grandfather of modern-day adventure racing is now available to video game players everywhere as Acclaim Entertainment, Inc. has shipped Paris-Dakar Rally for the PlayStation2 computer entertainment system.

Based upon the grueling Paris-Dakar race, which travels across 7,000 miles of the world’s toughest terrain, Acclaim’s Paris-Dakar Rally captures the essence of adventure in a high-speed interactive race of survival.

‘‘We continue to broaden the range and appeal of our product lineup and Paris-Dakar Rally fits ideally within that strategy," said Evan Stein, Acclaim’s Vice President of Brand. ‘‘With the popularity of off-road racing now at an all-time high, we believe Paris-Dakar Rally and its pick-up-and-play functionality, will thrill racing fans and casual players alike."

Paris-Dakar Rally offers a variety of exciting features, including:

-- 24 officially licensed cars, buggies, bikes and quads from today’s top manufacturers;

-- Each race stage has multiple routes to the check-point, yielding unparalleled replay value;

-- Three modes of play, each with a unique set of rules;

-- Realistic vehicle damage ranging from detachable doors and cracked windshields to devastating engine damage;

-- Fully interactive environments include real-time weather effects and mud slides;

-- Such customizable vehicle settings as suspension height and tire pressure;

-- Stamina pick-ups are available in each stage to boost the race crew;

-- Officially licensed Paris-Dakar race teams and in-game sponsors;

-- More than 40 in-game FMV's taken from footage of the actual Paris-Dakar Rally.

Paris-Dakar Rally is currently available for the PlayStation2 computer entertainment system at a suggested retail price of $49.99.

989 Sports' Formula One 2001 Provides Authentic Racing Sensation for American Motorsport Fans on Playstation2

Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. announced the North American release of the 989 Sports' branded Formula One 2001, exclusively for the PlayStation2 computer entertainment system. Developed by Studio Liverpool, Formula One 2001 is an authentic racing simulation designed by racing fans for racing fans. Officially licensed by Formula One Administration Limited, Formula One 2001 includes all the race teams, 22 drivers and 17 Grand Prix tracks of the 2001 FIA Formula One World Championship.

''It's great, definitely the best car game I've ever driven by far that I've played over the last few years. It's the closest you're going to get to a Formula 1 car -- game-wise anyway," remarks Benetton Formula 1 driver, Jenson Button. ''With most computer games, rivals are all the same. This game aims to make the F1 drivers like they are in real life and I'm impressed that the game has this variety."

To enhance the authenticity, Formula One 2001 allows players to choose between 11 different teams, including Ferrari, McLaren (Mercedes), Williams (BMW), Benetton (Renault) as well as the opportunity for players to choose their favorite driver. In addition, Formula One 2001 puts players in the driving seat by providing the user with each driver's unique attributes that simulate their real-life skills, whether it's being aggressive, smooth, fast in the rain or efficient in managing tire wear and car preservation. Depending on the Grand Prix track selection, players also have the ability to fully customize their car for optimum performance.

''Formula One 2001 features some of the most advanced automotive technology seen anywhere, creating an intoxicating blend of speed, power and exotic good looks," said Ami Blaire, director, product marketing, Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. ''As the number one motorsport in the world today, we are pleased to bring this intense, sophisticated racing simulation to the PlayStation 2 as a part of the 989 Sports brand."

For single players, Formula One 2001 offers Quick Race or Grand Prix modes that cater to both newcomers and experienced racers. In addition, players have a choice of a Single Race, a full Race Weekend or the ability to participate in the entire World Championship. For intense competition between players, there is a two-player mode -- which allows friends to take on each other as well as the virtual true-to-life Formula One drivers. In

addition, there is a Time Attack mode for up to 16 players. In this mode, one can instantly compare their lap times to those of up to 16 of their friends by taking turns to record the fastest lap on any of the 17 tracks provided. The independent Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) has rated Formula One 2001 ‘‘E" for everyone.

‘‘Casper Spirit Dimensions," TDK’S Newest Game for the PlayStation 2 Ships to Stores

Casper Materializes in Retail Stores Just in Time for Halloween

TDK Mediactive, Inc. announced that ‘‘Casper Spirit Dimensions" for the PlayStation2 computer entertainment system is now available in retail stores. In the game, Casper is a next-generation video game character with full-flight capability. Casper is on a quest to save the Spirit World from the nefarious Kibosh and his evil henchmen. ‘‘Casper" is rated ‘‘E" for Everybody by the ESRB and is available now for a suggested retail price of $49.99.

‘‘TDK Mediactive’s release of ’Casper Spirit Dimensions’ is our first next generation console release for 2001," said Vincent Bitetti, chief executive officer of TDK Mediactive. ‘‘The game’s intense and exciting game play, along with its sophisticated graphics and special effects help re-introduce Casper as an all-new next-generation video game character."

Casper Spirit Dimensions will have a playable demo at over 5,000 retail locations throughout the entire holiday season. Additionally, a playable demo will be on the cover-mounted disk on the January issue of the Official PlayStation Magazine.

Casper must travel to four different Spirit Dimensions in a quest to free spirits from the despicable Kibosh. These are the Medieval World, the Spirit Amusement Park, Kibosh’s Factory, and the Spirit World. Within each Dimension, Casper will find people in need of assistance. He will also find many of Kibosh’s dark minions who are out to stop him.

Each of the sixteen huge levels can be fully explored through 360-degree full flight movement. They are filled with puzzles and hazards, but they also contain a wide assortment of special power-ups that strengthen Casper and enhance his powers. This little ghost is going to need a lot of courage, and full mastery of his various ghostly abilities, in order to save the spirit world from Kibosh!

‘‘Casper Spirit Dimensions" includes the following features:

* Amazing graphics that take advantage of the PlayStationfi2 computer entertainment system
* Freedom of flight to any destination throughout the game.
* Four worlds to conquer: Spirit World, Kibosh’s Factory, Spirit Amusement Park, and Medieval World
* Four outrageous bosses for each world, including Casper’s arch-nemesis Kibosh.
* Key pick-ups that will lead Casper to bosses, extra lives, and enhancements of his abilities.

Infogrames to Release its Largest Playstation 2 Slate Ever for the 2001 Holiday Season

- Two New Atari Titles Among Six New PlayStation 2 Games - - Support for PSOne Still Strong With Four New Games For The Holidays -

Infogrames, Inc. announced that its 2001 holiday line-up of games for the Sony PlayStation 2 (PS2) computer entertainment system marks its largest PS2 slate to date, and includes two of the first titles to be introduced under its reinvented Atari brand. Over the next several weeks, Infogrames will release the Atari titles Splashdown and MXRider, which join the recently released NASCAR Heat 2002, Test Drive Off Road -- Wide Open, and Le Mans 24 Hours to comprise the Company’s PS2 holiday line-up.

In addition, Infogrames continues to support the well-established and still lucrative PSOne system with the release of four new titles this holiday season including: Backyard Soccer; Men In Black: The Series -- Crashdown; Nicktoons Racing; and Looney Tunes Sheep Raider.

‘‘This is our most exciting and diverse slate of PS2 and PSOne titles yet," said Bruno Bonnell, Chairman and CEO of Infogrames, Inc. ‘‘Our development teams have harnessed the power and capabilities of PS2 to deliver games that will capture the imagination and excitement of the gaming audience. We are especially thrilled to introduce our reinvented Atari brand on PlayStation 2 and are confident that PS2 fans will be riveted by the graphics and challenges of these new games."

Mr. Bonnell continued, ‘‘We also recognize tremendous value in continuing to develop games for legacy platforms, such as the original PlayStation, which is why we have a dynamic line-up of games for these fans, as well as fans of next-generation consoles. The demand for PS2 and PSOne games is as strong as ever, demonstrating customer loyalty to both platforms. We believe that our PS2 and PSOne holiday line-up will more than satisfy this demand ... and reinforce Sony’s reputation for delivering top-quality, innovative games."

The highly anticipated Atari title Splashdown will redefine personal watercraft recreation for the gaming environment. This watersport racing game has been designed to provide high-speed fun and entertainment in realistic and exciting water-based environments. With interactive physics objects, outstanding graphics, and the freedom to roam its 3D worlds, Splashdown will have players feeling as if they are really out on the open water. In addition to licensed Sea-Doo watercraft, Splashdown will offer amazing real-time water effects, and players will be able to perform more than 20 over-the-top acrobatic stunts. Splashdown will be available in mid-November at most major retail stores.

Motorcross racing comes to PS2 with the Atari title, MXrider, which immerses players in the most extreme sport around. With a large selection of game modes, easy pick-up-and-play controls and the craziest tricks and combos on two wheels, MXrider enables Federation Internationale de Motocyclisme (International Motocross League) Supercross racers to face off in five unique contests. Players can experience the excitement of off-roading on two wheels with all three motorbike sports (Motorcross, Supercross and Freestyle) and on 29 tracks, including official Motorcross tracks set in real world locations, specially designed Supercross tracks, and fantasy Freestyle arenas. MXrider will be available in mid-November at

most major retail stores.

Officially licensed by NASCAR, NASCAR Heat 2002 allows players to choose between Beat the Heat, Race the Pro, Head-to-Head, Championship and Single Race modes in one of the most intense racing games that has ever been brought to a gaming console. Single Race and Championship modes put gamers in the seat of powerful stock cars as they try to best the stars of NASCAR on just one track or the tracks of the 2001 NASCAR Winston Cup Season. More than 36 Beat the Heat racing scenarios, introduced by drivers like Jeff Gordon, give players the feeling of a one-on-one experience with the heroes of NASCAR as they are dropped into the most intense moments in NASCAR competition; asking them to make split-second decisions and develop the same skills required by real NASCAR drivers. Geared to the console gamer and adjustable to individual skill levels, NASCAR Heat 2002 makes every race fun, competitive action for the whole family. NASCAR Heat 2002 is currently available at most major retail stores for a suggested retail price of $49.99.

Test Drive Off-Road -- Wide Open is the newest installment in the Test Drive Off-Road series. The game features advanced technology enabling ‘‘go anywhere" environments, 15 licensed off-road vehicles and 30 wide-open tracks in three untamed landscape locations. Moab, Utah, Yosemite, Calif. and the Big Island of Hawaii set the stage for players to freely explore these real-world locations by choosing the path that is best suited to their truck while attempting to complete the course in the fastest time possible. Test Drive Off-Road - Wide Open is currently available at most major retail stores for a suggested retail price of $49.99.

Le Mans 24 Hours delivers the ultimate 24-hour endurance racing with new teams, tracks and gameplay mechanics. Highlights include real-world racing teams from the 2000 Le Mans race, fully animated pit crews and drivers, a new track from the U.S. Le Mans racing series, and advanced artificial intelligence. Le Mans 24 Hours boasts five challenging game styles, 12 real-world tracks and more than 70 licensed vehicles. Le Mans 24 Hours is the only officially licensed game of the 24 Heures du Mans. Le Mans 24 Hours is currently available at most major retail stores for a suggested retail price of $49.95.

Infogrames’ four new PSOne titles include: Backyard Soccer, the first title of the Backyard Sports franchise to appear on a console system, shipped to most major retail stores this week with a suggested retail price of $19.99; Men In Black: The Series -- Crashdown, an action-adventure game based on the enormously popular animated television series, which will be available in mid- November; Nicktoons Racing, wild, high-speed racing action with all of the favorite Nicktoons characters, currently available at most major retail stores for a suggested retail price of $29.99; and Looney Tunes Sheep Raider, the classic sheep-stealing cartoon comes to life with Ralph Wolf, Sam Sheepdog and many other favorite Looney Tunes characters which recently shipped to most major retail stores at a suggested retail price of $19.99.

Activision Brings All-New Web-Swinging and Mutant Adventures To the Game Boy Advance

Some of the most popular Marvel super heroes are set to once again wield justice and protect the innocent with the releases of Activision, Inc.’s Spider-Man for the PC and Spider-Man: Mysterio’s Menace and X-Men: Reign of

Apocalypse, both for the Game Boy Advance. These releases mark the super heroes' debut on Nintendo's new handheld video game system. All of the games, which have shipped to North American retail stores, are rated ''E" (''Everyone" -- content suitable for persons ages 6 and older) by the ESRB and carry suggested retail prices of $29.99 for the PC and $39.99 for the Game Boy Advance.

''Spider-Man and the X-Men have entertained millions of people around the world for more than 30 years, and now they are set to bring their fans all-new interactive adventures," said Larry Goldberg, executive vice president, Activision Worldwide Studios. ''These releases capture the allure, mystery and excitement of the famous comic brands with the same rich detail and excellent gameplay that gamers have come to expect from our titles."

Spider-Man: Mysterio's Menace lets pocket gamers live the fantasy of Marvel's legendary webslinger with the enhanced, side-scrolling gameplay and powerful graphics of the Game Boy Advance. When Mysterio unleashes his illusory schemes, Spider-Man must stop his evil plan and restore life to normal.

X-Men: Reign of Apocalypse features four of Marvel's most popular X-Men -- Wolverine, Storm, Rogue and Cyclops -- in a side-scrolling brawler as they try to escape arch-villain Apocalypse. Two different gameplay modes -- single- player story and multi-player Versus -- provide non-stop adventurous fun and fighting game action. Along the way, players will interact with over 30 other characters from the X-Men Universe.

Spider-Man for the PC is the first free-roaming, 3D action/adventure game to feature the arachnid hero. Framed by super-villains, Spider-Man must utilize his super strength with web-slinging, crawling up walls, agility, and ''Spider-Sense" to clear his name and capture enemies such as Rhino, Mysterio and Scorpion. Eight main comic book locations and 30 sub-section levels set the stage for battles and fun.

Xbox to Offer Parental Controls

Parents worried about the content of videogames designed for Microsoft's Xbox will have the option of restricting their children's access.

The head of Microsoft Corp.'s Xbox division said Thursday that its new video game console would be the first to include a parental control that can restrict children's access to violent or inappropriate content.

Robbie Bach, Microsoft's chief Xbox officer, said a simple setup procedure will let parents determine what level of violent games they want their kids to be playing, based on a standard ratings system. The control will be available when the $299 game system debuts Nov. 15.

Most video games are rated for content by the independent Entertainment Software Rating Board. Xbox's system will let users block games according to their ratings, and set a password to prevent kids from toying with it.

''We're big supporters of the creative concept on a console and that people can have a broad range of content, but we also believe that parents should have the right tools to be able to keep track of and manage what their kids are playing," Bach said.

Xbox developers have been working on the control for months, and it was not adopted because of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, he said, although he and others in the gaming industry have made slight modifications to their combat-oriented games following the attacks.

Neither of Microsoft's chief competitors, Sony and Nintendo, offer parental controls on their game consoles, although Sony's PlayStation 2 has a password-controlled parental block on the DVD player add-on.

Microsoft initially is marketing its system at 15- to 25-year-old ''hard-core gamers" - those who will be wowed by realistic graphics and are old enough to deal with violent content. Bach said some of Xbox's games will be violent enough to warrant a ''mature" rating.

But P.J. McNealy, an analyst with Gartner G2, said the parental control may help Microsoft compete with Nintendo when it tries to appeal to a younger audience.

''Nintendo has traditional been the family friendly console," McNealy said. ''They used to be the safe choice: no matter what kids bought for Nintendo, parents didn't have to worry. And this helps (Microsoft) set up to battle for that space."

Microsoft may also be trying to reassure parents concerned about Xbox's realistic graphics, McNealy said.

''Given the fact that graphics around these games are getting much more realistic and things like the violence levels could be much more graphically portrayed, it's not a huge surprise that they're doing this," he said.

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->A-ONE Gaming Online - Online Users Growl & Purr!
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Limited Edition CyberVirus at CinciClassic

October 4th, 2001

For immediate release:

Songbird Productions recently announced its support for the upcoming CinciClassic gaming event with the news that a limited edition version of CyberVirus would be available at the show.

Only 20 units of this limited edition game will be made. The game will include eight missions, at least two of which will not appear in the future general release of CyberVirus. Both the cartridge label and opening screens will indicate this is the special CinciClassic version.

"I've been making good progress on the CyberVirus source code just in the

last month or so," noted Carl Forhan, founder of Songbird. "Then I found out that CinciClassic was on for this year, and the timing seemed perfect to support the show and get a fully playable sneak preview of the game out there to Lynx fans.

Craig Maloney, co-organizer for the event, commented, "We were very excited to showcase a pre-release version of Protector for the Atari Jaguar in 1999, and this year we are thrilled that Songbird is offering a CinciClassic special edition of CyberVirus for the Atari Lynx."

CinciClassic will be held in Cincinnati, OH, on November 9-11. For all the details on the event, please visit http://www.cinciclassic.com.

Songbird Productions is the premier developer and publisher for the Atari Lynx and Jaguar. To keep up to date with the latest news at Songbird Productions, be sure to visit the company web site at http://songbird.atari.net.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Computer Industry Takes on Viruses

The FBI is teaming with the computer industry to help American companies and regular Internet users prevent the 20 worst computer threats - from the Code Red worm to the Melissa virus.

The FBI also announced Monday it is putting computer security tips for home users on the National Infrastructure Protection Center's Web site with the intention of making it a one-stop shop for home users confused by most security terms.

''The challenge right now is that (home users) either go to a vendor, or they go to a site that's too techie for them, so they give up," said Alan Paller, research director at the Sans Institute, working with the government on the project.

''This is a site that's designed for people that are regular users, and it isn't trying to sell them anything," he said. The tips include using updated antivirus software and being suspicious of e-mail attachments.

All the recent Internet viruses took advantage of well-known program vulnerabilities, and the government hopes to get users and companies to patch them before the next virus appears.

The list, compiled with the help of over 50 computer security experts, addresses software bugs in Unix and Microsoft Windows operating systems, as

well as many common mistakes. These include using simple passwords and not backing up critical data.

The all-purpose fix will help counter the thousands of hacking tools that scan through the Internet looking for vulnerable computers.

‘‘It lets (computer administrators) know the things these scanning programs are looking for, and it will protect them the instant they put the machine on the Internet," Paller said.

Both the list and the fixes can be found on the nonprofit Sans Institute Web site. The institute’s Paller said the Top 20 scanner can be obtained for free by sending an e-mail to the Center for Internet Security, using instructions found on the Sans Institute Web site at http://www.sans.org.

Paller said the fix eventually will be distributed on a CD-ROM as well.

Security experts long have said computer users should download regularly new software fixes, known as patches, but the practice is frequently overlooked at large companies and universities.

Many individual users are unaware of vulnerabilities in their computers and find installing software updates tedious and difficult.

In July, the FBI and industry groups joined in a campaign to tell computer users how to protect themselves from the Code Red worm. Their project helped blunt the effects of the worm, which could have slowed the Internet.

The list, and the single fix, answers the problem of lack of user awareness. The program will be updated periodically to scan for and close new holes, Paller said. He said it also is a step closer to protecting computer users against the many vulnerabilities in complicated computer software.

‘‘Because there are a thousand potential vulnerabilities, there’s no way to be successful," Paller said. ‘‘With this, you can have success on the first 20, then move on to the next 20."

Microsoft Steps Up Software Security

Microsoft on Wednesday announced a new initiative to help customers improve the security of their networks after a string of high-profile viruses targeted Microsoft software used to run Web sites.

‘‘With the virus attacks of late and the numbers of those and how vicious those attacks have been ... it’s incumbent on Microsoft, being in the leadership position we’re in, to help drive forward the industry in this area," Brian Valentine, senior vice president of the Windows Division at Microsoft, said in an interview.

‘‘We can’t just sit back and think about Microsoft," said Valentine, who is leading Microsoft’s new security task force.

The announcement follows a string of worms and other security breaches, including the Code Red worm of August and Nimda worm in September.

Those worms, which are self-propagating viruses, exploited holes in

Microsoft’s Internet Information Services server software and installed ‘‘backdoors" that left infected computers vulnerable to future hacking.

IIS, which is used to run Web sites, is sold separately and comes bundled with Windows 2000 and Windows NT.

In addition to repeated complaints over the years by security experts over what they say is lax security, Microsoft recently has also been singled out by a market research firm and an insurance underwriter.

Gartner Group has urged Microsoft customers hit by the worms to switch to Apache or iPlanet Web servers. And J.S. Wurzler Underwriting Managers’ Safeonline division is charging some companies using IIS as much as 15 percent more in premiums.

Valentine denied that the company was responding directly to those moves, but he said they illustrated a general problem of customer confidence that the company hoped to address.

Signaling a change in long-standing policy for Microsoft, the company said it will deliver all of its software -- including the next version of IIS that will be bundled with Windows .Net Server next year -- in the ‘‘locked down" position by default.

That means the settings will be placed in the most secure configurations when shipped, rather than in the most ‘‘open" position, which can leave the computer more vulnerable to hacking, but can offer more immediate and advanced functionality.

Under the new initiative, too, Microsoft will offer a toll-free support line (1-866-727-2338) customers can call when they are hit by viruses and a free CD that contains fixes for all the vulnerabilities in Windows NT 4.0 and Windows 2000, as well as software to lock down IIS.

In coming months Microsoft plans to offer a free online service that will notify customers of security vulnerabilities and automatically download the fixes.

Microsoft is also training its technicians to help companies secure their networks before issues arise rather than merely respond to situations after they occur, Valentine said.

In addition, the company also said it would continue addressing security issues during the development of its software to minimize the number of bugs and holes in its new products.

Security exploits are common and affect all software, but Microsoft has born the brunt of them through the years.

The company contends that its software is targeted by virus writers and malicious hackers because it is so ubiquitous. Critics have complained, however, that Microsoft software is inherently insecure.

At a minimum, critics have said, the company should ship its software so that sophisticated users can decide for themselves the security level they want and unsophisticated users won’t be caught off guard by security problems as they did with Code Red and Nimda.

FTC Shuts Thousands of Deceptive Web Sites

A U.S. court has shut down thousands of Web sites that diverted Web surfers from intended destinations and bombarded them with ads for pornography and gambling, the U.S. government said on Monday.

But officials at the Federal Trade Commission said at a news conference that many of the sites were up and running again.

According to a motion filed by the FTC last week, John Zuccarini, of Andalusia, Pennsylvania, outside Philadelphia, owned more than 5,500 Internet domain names that diverted Web surfers from their intended destinations and exposed them to pop-up ads.

Zuccarini did not return calls seeking comment.

According to the FTC, Zuccarini registered thousands of misspellings and variations of popular sites such as www.cartoonnetwork.com, in a bid to draw traffic from sloppy typists and those not sure of an exact address.

Zuccarini had registered 41 variations on the name of pop star Britney Spears, the FTC said.

Once steered to his site, visitors would find their screens filled with pop-up ads for everything from sweepstakes to credit cards to hard-core pornography.

Attempts to leave the site would trigger yet more pop-up ads, the FTC said in its complaint filed in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia.

‘‘After one FTC staff member closed out of 32 separate windows, leaving just two windows on the task bar, he selected the ’back’ button, only to watch as the same seven windows that initiated the blitz erupted on his screen, and the cybertrap began anew," the complaint said.

Users would often be forced to restart their computers to escape, FTC officials said.

The scheme is especially harmful to children or employees who may put their jobs at risk when they inadvertently call up pornographic or gambling-related material, said FTC chairman Timothy Muris.

‘‘This scheme prevents consumers from controlling their Internet browsers, invades their privacy, robs them of their time, exposes kids to ads for pornography, and violates trademark rights. And this scam, and ones like it, undermine consumer confidence in the Internet," Muris said.

In its court action, the FTC is seeking to get Zuccarini to return profits he has made since setting up his operation in 1998, a figure that could be as high as $1 million a year.

According to the FTC, Zuccarini has been sued at least 63 times in the last two years by trademark owners, celebrities or others seeking to recover variants of their Internet domain names. He has lost 53 of those suits and been forced to return nearly 200 domain names, the FTC said.

The district court ordered Zuccarini to take his sites offline last Tuesday, but as of Monday several Internet domains registered in his name,

such as www.annakurnikova.com, were still functional.

While Zuccarini closed down the two ‘‘bridge" sites that received and handled the bulk of the traffic, he has opened up others to replace them, said Howard Beals, head of the FTC’s bureau of consumer protection.

Thus many of his domain names, such as www.cartoonnetwok.com, simply steer Web surfers to another location with similar results.

The move could place Zuccarini in contempt of court, but officials said they still have not been able to locate him to serve him formally with court papers.

‘‘It’s our understanding he can operate this entire scheme from a laptop computer anywhere he can get an Internet connection," said Marc Groman, an FTC investigator.

Senators Move to Renew Net-Tax Ban Without Tax

Three key senators moved Tuesday to extend a soon-to-expire ban on Internet-specific taxes, hoping to separate it from a more controversial proposal that would allow states to tax online sales.

Democratic Senators Ron Wyden and Patrick Leahy and Republican John McCain introduced a bill that would extend for two years a ban on Internet access and other ‘‘multiple and discriminatory" taxes on e-commerce. The current ban is slated to expire on Oct. 21.

The move was seen as a blow to state and local governments, who hope to tie any extension of the ban to a measure that would make it easier for them to tax online sales.

Under a 1992 Supreme Court decision, states cannot require out-of-state retailers such as catalog companies to collect sales taxes unless they have a physical presence in the state.

Many state and local officials fear a growing loss of revenues -- $13.3 billion this year, according to one study released Tuesday -- as constituents increasingly shop online.

Internet retailers have said it would be impossible for them to comply with the maze of state and local tax codes across the United States.

A coalition of states is in the process of simplifying their tax codes with the hope that Congress will allow them to collect sales taxes on remote sellers.

Senate negotiators in the Commerce Committee have worked behind the scenes for months to reach a compromise that would help states in their effort.

In a telephone interview, Wyden said the looming deadline means Congress needs to act to renew the current ban while discussions continue.

State efforts to simplify their sales-tax systems were not far enough along to need attention from Congress, he said.

Wyden also said he was not convinced that states have been hurt by losses

from e-commerce, or that imposing sales taxes online was necessarily a good idea.

‘‘Do you want to make somebody who’s located thousands and thousands of miles away pay taxes if they have no presence in that jurisdiction other than a Web site?" Wyden said.

A lobbyist for the National Governors Association said an extension would just allow lawmakers to ignore the sales-tax issue.

‘‘If you’re one of the people that doesn’t want to pay, what incentive do you have to work anything out given two more years?" asked Frank Shafroth, director of state and federal relations for the National Governors’ Association.

Shafroth said it appears unlikely Congress will pass legislation supporting the states’ effort this year, so his group will seek to prevent a straight moratorium extension from passing on its own.

In the House of Representatives, a subcommittee approved legislation in August that would make the ban on Internet access taxes permanent and extend the moratorium on other taxes for five years.

In the Senate, the Commerce Committee will consider the bill. The House bill will next be taken up by the Judiciary Committee.

AOL Clears Path To Use Web Bugs, Cookies

A recent addition to America Online’s privacy policy clears the way for the company to use online tracking tools, including cookies and Web bugs, to compile anonymous data about its members and measure the effectiveness of advertising.

"AOL and its advertisers may use cookie technology to determine on an anonymous basis which advertisements members have seen and how members responded to them," the policy reads following an Aug. 28 amendment. "AOL and its advertisers may also use small pieces of code called ’Web beacons’ or ’clear GIFs’ to collect anonymous and aggregate advertising metrics, such as counting page views, promotion views, or advertising responses.

"AOL does not allow advertisers or their advertising networks to use these technologies on AOL to compile profiles about the different Web sites that a particular member visits."

Company spokesman Andrew Weinstein said the AOL Time Warner division has not yet begun using cookies or Web bugs but could do so. He added that the company would not use the technology to track user behavior. Rather, the cookies and bugs would only be used to figure out how many people viewed a certain type of advertisement.

"We do not allow these technologies to track what members are doing on the Web or on the service, nor do we allow any organization to build profiles about our members," he said.

The presence of cookies and beacons, also known as Web bugs and clear GIFs, would be a first for AOL, but remains a common element around the Web.

Cookies are bits of software that a Web site places onto one’s hard drive, allowing it to store personal information such as passwords and screen names. Web bugs are pieces of code embedded into a site’s source code that can track user behavior while on the site. Bugs can also be used to create profiles of site visitors. Some marketers have used such profiles for targeting purposes, which makes some privacy advocates nervous.

In fact, the debate over Web bugs has become an industrywide issue. The Network Advertising Initiative in the beginning of this year launched a program to develop a standard for using Web bugs. The group, which represents online advertisers, is seeking feedback from the Federal Trade Commission.

From the privacy perspective, Web bugs raise concerns because they have the ability to offer detailed information about what each visitor does on the site. But in this case, AOL may use them as another way to count traffic and other types of bulk data, according to privacy experts.

CNET Networks, the publisher of News.com, also makes use of Web bugs, a practice disclosed in the company’s privacy policy. According to the policy, CNET does not "aggregate or track personally identifiable information when using clear GIFs, only usage patterns."

"Web bugs have many, many uses, and AOL seems to lay out what they’re looking for," said Richard Smith, chief technology officer for the Privacy Foundation. "They simply want to count how many unique visitors go to Web pages."

Court Examines Internet Case

The Supreme Court is examining a complex Internet case that could eventually affect the availability of online services and what most people pay for them.

The court is expected to rule by summer on a fight over the cost of establishing and maintaining some Internet and wireless networks. Specifically, the fight concerns the rent that cable television companies must pay utilities to attach wires for high-speed Internet service to the utilities’ poles, and whether the Federal Communications Commission can control the rate.

The justices also will consider whether cellular telephone companies are entitled to pay government-limited rates for attaching their equipment to utility poles.

The case is one of three the court will hear this fall that deal with lingering questions from a 1996 congressional overhaul of the nation’s telecommunications laws. Congress intended to promote competition among telephone companies, but was less clear about regulation of then-emerging Internet technologies.

A federal appeals panel ruled last year that the FCC does not have the authority to regulate pole rental rates for Internet service. The FCC claims Congress intended it to have that power.

In arguments Tuesday, several justices focused on a basic question posed by

the federal government and cable companies: If Congress wanted to increase competition and make Internet service more widely available by inviting cable companies to go head-to-head with phone companies in the Internet service market, why would it have let utilities jack up the rent for poles?

‘‘What sense would it make to say, ’Cable, if you dare go into the Internet service business, you’re off the pole?"’ asked Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

With government regulation of the rates, the cable industry paid about $5 a pole annually to string and operate its wires, said Marc Smith, spokesman for the National Cable and Telecommunications Association. After the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruling, one utility began charging $38 a pole, he said.

The industry has not calculated the cost of higher rates nationwide, but the estimate is in the billions of dollars, Smith said. For the cable customer, that could mean an extra $1.50 or so on each monthly bill, he said.

‘‘The most immediate cost to the consumer is the cost of doing business" for the cable company, whether it is providing television or Internet service or both, Smith said.

Justices Antonin Scalia and David H. Souter focused on what they suggested was a lapse by the FCC. The agency has not conclusively categorized Internet service as telecommunications under its rules and definitions. The definition would affect what rates apply.

‘‘We’re talking about the rates here," Scalia said. ‘‘That’s the fighting issue."

Assistant Solicitor General James A. Feldman, representing the government, replied that the real issue is not the specific rate, but whether the FCC has the power to regulate the Internet pole issue at all.

Justice Sandra Day O’Connor did not participate. Although the court did not explain her absence, she holds stock in companies that could be affected by the court’s ruling, including telephone companies AT&T and MCI, and several computer or Internet firms.

The cases are National Cable Television Association v. Gulf Power Co., 00-832, and Federal Communications Commission v. Gulf Power Co., 00-843.

U.S. Leaders Propose PATRIOT Anti-Terrorist Bill

On Tuesday, leaders of the House Judiciary Committee will begin reviewing a draft of a bill submitted last week by Attorney General John Ashcroft that would call for increased surveillance of e-mail and other cyber activity by the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) and other law enforcement agencies.

The new bill, called PATRIOT (Provide Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism), has apparently limited some of the powers originally given to law enforcement agencies. But agencies will still be granted increased authority to gather and share information tracked through snooping technology, like the FBI’s DCS1000 (formerly

called Carnivore).

Last week, members of Congress balked at the original draft of the bill, known as the Anti-Terrorist Act, due to worries about its potential affect on civil liberties. But according to news sources, members of both the House and Senate Judiciary Committees worked over the weekend and into Monday to draft a revised version of the bill.

In pushing passage of the PATRIOT bill, Attorney General Ashcroft told news sources that the FBI and other agencies need better tools with which to fight terrorism.

"Law enforcement tools created decades ago were crafted for rotary telephones, not e-mail, the Internet, mobile communications and voice-mail," said Ashcroft. Continuing with present-day surveillance laws, he added, is the equivalent of "sending our troops into the modern field of battle with antique weapons."

The Bush administration is reportedly pressing for quick passage of the proposed legislation, and the Senate Judiciary Committee is still rewriting portions of the bill in order to get it passed as quickly as possible.

Brian Burke, senior Internet security analyst for research firm IDC, told NewsFactor Network that the events of September 11th have driven law enforcement agencies to aggressively prosecute anyone responsible for interfering with or attacking critical infrastructure.

Moreover, said Burke, commercial firms will increasingly cooperate with authorities in order to avoid being labeled "unpatriotic."

Said Burke: "This label will sharply diminish a company’s ability to sell its products, work with its partners, and/or maintain government contracts."

In addition, Burke said, the specter of terrorism has caused everyone in the United States to think about security on a daily basis.

Such thinking "will drive the development of security technologies, increase their use, and change the market," said Burke. "While there are negative implications in our analysis associated with privacy and civil liberties, the positive aspects of improved security awareness and heightened national security will compensate.

"The bottom line is that security is now and will continue to be a mandatory consideration, not just a discretionary purchase."

French Caldwell, a Gartner Inc. research director, told NewsFactor that although the proposed legislation is all well and good, it does not address the root of the problem.

This legislation "won’t make the average citizen or businessperson feel more secure," Caldwell said. "It may track down the people responsible [for the most recent attack], but it fails to address preventative measures."

Said Caldwell: "The Beltway needs to get out of this reactionary mode and become more responsive" in its dealings with the terrorist threat.

Anti-Terrorism Bills Raise Online Privacy Issues

On Thursday, both the House Judiciary Committee and the Senate Judiciary Committee introduced their versions of anti-terrorist legislation to their respective members.

According to a press release issued late Wednesday, the House Judiciary Committee, headed by F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr., passed its PATRIOT (Provide Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism) Act of 2001 by a 36-0 vote after about six hours of intense debate. A chamber-wide vote on the measure is expected by early next week.

Meanwhile, the Senate Judiciary Committee on Thursday introduced its own version of the bill, called the Uniting and Strengthen America Act of 2001.

Ranking Republican Senate Judiciary member Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) said in a prepared statement: "I am pleased to report that our agreement takes into account each of our principled beliefs and is based on our views on the proper balance between the role of law enforcement and our civil liberties."

While both versions of the bill call for increased leeway for law enforcement agencies to track suspects through telecommunications and the Internet, the Senate version does not include a so-called sunset clause that would oblige the legislative branch to revisit the broadened monitoring procedures two years after its passage.

Both bills allow federal law enforcement agencies like the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to follow foreign-intelligence guidelines when requesting permission to wiretap suspects. Those rules are more expansive in application than the more rigid evidentiary standards presently in place.

Sources have noted, however, that provisions of these bills, which were revised from Attorney General John Ashcroft’s draft recommendations, still trouble many legislators, who are fearful such points might trample long-held civil liberties.

Bill Malik, vice-president and research area director for Gartner Inc.’s information security group, told NewsFactor Network that the attorney general’s recommendations are not pushing the envelope with respect to eroding civil liberties. Rather, said Malik, Ashcroft wants to update antique laws that were designed for an era that had no prepaid cell phones and had not heard of the Internet.

Congress passed laws in the late 1950s and early 1960s that ensured that political structures did not have broad powers to act as they did during the McCarthy era, Malik told NewsFactor.

"But there have been great changes since the 50s and 60s," Malik continued. "Now gangsters can buy crates of cell phones, use them once and discard them -- or can use prepaid cell phones that don’t even have a traceable phone number."

And information passed over the Internet, whether by text or Web phone, is sent in tiny digitized packets that move down many separate paths before reassembling at their destination. As a result, present wiretapping rules

that require a separate warrant for each phone number or Internet address to be tapped cannot hope to be effective, proponents of the new laws argue.

Malik likened the present situation to attempting to put together 100 million different puzzles, each with 1,000 different pieces.

Malik said that although the proposed laws are in keeping with the times, exponential improvements in technology will likely lead to a redefining of the concept of privacy itself.

Trends in surveillance technology indicate that ten years from now, various agencies -- and individuals, for that matter -- will have the capability to monitor people in real time.

For example, said Malik, say salesman XYZ goes to the Super Bowl with salesman ABC, and they are digitally captured as they enter the stadium. XYZ may be there with his competitor because they're buddies, or because ABC is trying to recruit him.

Neither activity is illegal. However, it's reasonable that XYZ wants to keep this information private, if only to keep from bending his boss out of shape. But with easy and cheap surveillance everywhere, how can XYZ maintain his privacy?

Malik went on to say that it's healthy for the nation to begin discussion of these issues, and proposed that different grades of knowledge be codified relative to their perceived importance.

But, asked Malik: "Fundamentally, will people accept that the concept of privacy is fast becoming obsolete?"

San Francisco Bans Filters In Libraries

San Francisco officials have voted to ban Internet filters on computers in local public libraries, risking the loss of some $20,000 in federal funds.

San Francisco's Board of Supervisors on Monday unanimously prohibited Internet filters on city-owned computers used by the public for Web access. But an amendment to the legislation excludes Internet terminals designated exclusively for individuals under the age of 13.

The filter ban rejects regulations governing federal funding of schools and libraries enacted last year under the Children's Internet Protection Act (CHIPA). That law requires schools and libraries to filter Web content or forgo federal funding. The American Civil Liberties Union and American Library Association have challenged the law, saying it violates First Amendment rights.

San Francisco Supervisor Mark Leno, who sponsored the ordinance, said an Internet filter is "flawed technology," failing to block 20 percent of objectionable Web sites and at the same time restricting access to harmless sites.

"There is no technology yet that can differentiate between what is harmful and what is not," Leno said. "Installing Internet filtering, I think, risks giving parents a false sense of security that they need not take

responsibility for their children’s activities...It’s more important that the library along with parents teach our children how to use the Internet responsibly, and there’s no filtering device that can substitute for that."

Leno said filters would block information related to many health-related issues, such as breast cancer, AIDS, anorexia and sexuality. He added that other sites, including those of the San Francisco Chronicle, Superbowl XXX and Planned Parenthood, would be blocked with filters.

Marcia Schneider, spokeswoman for the San Francisco Library, said the legislation passed by the board supports the library’s current policy, which is to not use filters on public Internet terminals. The San Francisco Public Library and its 26 branches have more than 200 Internet terminals.

Schneider said that if the library loses funding from state or federal sources as a result of refusing to use filters, the board and the mayor would favor giving the department the equivalent of the estimated funding loss.

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